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George Washington



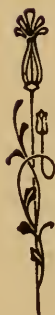
An address by

CHAS. EUGENE CLARK

Vice-President of the Peoples Savings Bank and Trust
Company of Covington, Kentucky



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AN ADDRESS BY CHAS. EUGENE CLARK,
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GEORGE WASHINGTON, our first President, was the great grandson of John Washington, an English gentleman of culture, who migrated to Westmoreland County, Virginia, in the year 1662, and who became a man of large figure in the colony of Virginia, following the life of a planter, and who became a member of the House of Burgesses of the colony in 1666, and who, through his industry, acquired large landed possessions, servants, cattle and other wealth of the day.

The great-grandfather of the subject of this sketch married Ann Pope, by whom he had three children, Lawrence, John and Ann Washington. Lawrence married Mildred Warner, and to which union was born John, Augustine, also known as Austin, and Mildred Washington.

Austin intermarried with the beautiful Mary Ball, the cultured daughter of a wealthy planter. The couple had six children, among whom was the subject of this address, George Washington, who was born at Bridge's Creek in Westmoreland County, February 22nd, 1732.

Three years later the home of his parents was burned, and they removed to Stafford on the north bank of the Rappahannock, opposite the town of Frederickstown, where Austin Washington died in the year 1743, leaving a large landed estate, the greater portion of which he devised to his son Lawrence, a son by a former marriage, and who received the place on Hunting Creek and which is now known as Mt. Vernon, and to his son George he gave the place on the Rappahannock.

Austin's widow, with her small children, all of tender years, were left in ordinary circumstances. She purchased a small one-story house of three rooms in Frederickburg to

which she brought her little family, and there reared them to the best of her ability in humble surroundings, while personally directing in the management and farming with the assistance of her servants the plantation across the Rappahannock.

George Washington, our future president, had for many years few enjoyments that were not common to other boys of the time. His schooling facilities were very limited, he attending a field school, as it was then known, conducted by a church sexton.

At a later period he was removed to the home of his half-brother Lawrence at Mt. Vernon, where he had the opportunity of meeting people of greater quality, dignity and breeding than had been his wont at Fredericksburg.

Among the company whom he was privileged to meet in his new home none influenced him more than Lord Fairfax and the noble Lord's cousin, both of whom took a great interest in Washington, now largely grown to the estate of young manhood, he being now sixteen years of age, athletic, tall and straight, some six feet in stature, of a light complexion with brown hair and marvelous blue eyes.

The young Washington not only hunted at will over the plantation at Mt. Vernon, but also met with Lord Fairfax in the chase, a sport then much in vogue, and this intimacy ripened into a warm friendship, and later led to the young man's employment as private surveyor to his lordship's lands, lying in the wilds of the then sparsely settled country on the headwaters of the Monongahela, Allegheny and Ohio rivers.

This employment having been undertaken amidst great danger, was creditably performed in the face of murderous Indians, hostile Frenchmen and the absence of all human and domestic comforts. His roof was the sky and bearskins and leaves furnished his bed, and great fatigue was ever encountered as they toiled over the rugged country. This employment secured for him the position of public surveyor of the colony of Virginia.

These surveying campaigns which he now undertook and prosecuted with great activity enured him to hardships. They taught him the ways of the woods and that of its wild inhabitants. Through them he learned the course of the streams and where lie the best routes of travel through a rugged and unbroken wilderness.

In these expeditions he learned the virtue of self-reliance and was trained for the many glorious military services which he later rendered his country, and which resulted after many reverses in a great triumph of arms at the battles of the Meadows and Ft. Necessity.

He later took Ft. Duquesne, after the English commander, General Braddock, had failed to storm it, and broke the power of the French and Indians, and Ft. Duquesne became Ft. Pitt, now known as Pittsburgh of our own day, which opened the way to the Ohio and the great West, for English colonists.

His brilliant victories on the headwaters of these rivers was of great significance and opened the way for the writing of the chapter of the development of the great West, which then began at the slopes of the Alleghenies and extended westward to the Mississippi and onward across the boundless prairies to the Rockies.

At this time that great stretch of country was absolutely unknown. Its only inhabitants were the fierce Redskins, who roamed its limitless forests in quest of game, which everywhere abounded. Today it is the very heart of our common country, with its teeming millions of energetic people and with boundless resources and wealth. But its future was forecast by the brilliant victory of George Washington, as he climbed the mountains and fought and conquered the hostile French and Indians, who were then its masters.

These brilliant campaigns, with their several successes and reverses, taught the then valiant young soldier the art of war and developed in him those characteristics which enabled him at a later day, as Commander-in-Chief of the forces of

the revolted colonies, to successfully conduct the mighty campaign waged through the years of the war of the Revolution against a well organized army, the very flower of England's troops, and which resulted in our independence.

His resourcefulness and prowess as exhibited on many a battlefield with the French and Indians became a matter of common knowledge throughout the colonies, and especially in that of Virginia, and inspired the colonial soldiers to enlist under his banners and fight with great bravery, and helped win many a hard-fought battle.

In these French and Indian campaigns, which the colonists had been fighting for more than a hundred years, were foreshadowed the sufferings of Valley Forge and the immortal victory of Yorktown, and there was developed the stratagem of this wary and indomitable soldier who was to be the savior of his country in its struggle for a life of independence.

George Washington was ever modest, vigilant, kind and valiant, and always had a due regard to the lives of his men. He never wantonly sacrificed them, but bided his time and opportunity.

He often chafed under the intollerance and ignorance of the British officers and troops in his earlier campaigns waged for the British crown and was much chagrined at the discourteous treatment which he in common with his fellow Virginians suffered at their hands and especially at that of General Braddock's.

As a citizen and military commander his character was such and his fame so great and his integrity and leadership so well known that he was unanimously chosen as Commander-in-Chief of the colonial forces when the war for independence began.

His conduct in that war, his battles and the sufferings of his troops and the hardship endured by him have become matters of common knowledge, and have been interwoven in the very warp and woof of our history, and have become an inspiration to our people, one of its priceless heritages.

His fame became world-wide, and after one of his most brilliant maneuvers he received a message from Frederick the Great of Prussia, who honored him by the greeting, "from the oldest General in the world to the Greatest," as he commended the brilliant campaigns and strategy of our hero.

Washington will be ever remembered and honored for the rebuke which he administered to the generals and those malcontents of the army who were mutinying over the want of their pay. His words breathed the spirit of freedom and accomplished the desired effect. From that time forward, the highest spirit of patriotism prevailed throughout the army, and one and all willingly bore every hardship.

His refusal of the offer of a crown and his declination which was a stinging rebuke on this occasion, is an undying testimony to his patriotism as a typical American. To him all honor, for he was a royal example of fortitude, energy and patriotism.

He became the unanimous choice of the nation for the Presidency upon the termination of the war for independence. His hesitancy and diffidence in the acceptance of this high office did him great honor, for although pre-eminent among the men of his time, he considered that he was but one among many loyal patriots who had covered themselves with greatest glory, and to whom we as a people owe undying honor.

For it was in this period of our history when our forefathers, struggling against great odds, established the nobility, grandeur, patience, breadth, depth and the resourcefulness of American character and limned upon the heavens the heights of American patriotism, which has ever actuated our people and been its greatest inspiration as we have wrought and visualized in the century of our accomplishment and upon which we have builded our character and progress.

Washington displayed great tact in the selection of his cabinet and in dealing with the multifarious interests of the

new republic, and succeeded on the whole in giving general satisfaction during his terms of office in the exalted station to which he had been chosen.

Yet notwithstanding his unblemished character, patriotism and great work he did not escape that calumny that is ever heaped upon those occupying the first stations in life and who endeavor to worthily serve their fellowmen and country. He, like all other great leaders, who sit in the sun of accomplishment, became shining targets for the disaffected, the envious and the unpatriotic. Such is ever one of the burdens and inheritances of greatness.

Through it all our first president was unshaken in his fidelity to the constitution and the ideals and the people whom he served, and his reputation was untarnished, for the shafts of envy, by reason of its noble texture, were turned aside, just as the mud daubs fall off the polished marble. He earnestly endeavored to enforce the laws, maintain order, fulfill his oath of office and lead the republic to greater national life.

He displayed great tact and good sense in supporting the policies of Alexander Hamilton against great opposition and persuasion to the contrary. He recognized the brilliancy of Hamilton and the soundness of his theories and that they underlied the future greatness of our country.

Washington exercised wisdom and statesmanship of a high order in observing a strict neutrality in the war that was then being waged between England and France during his administration. He realized that should we attempt to take sides that we would become like grain between the millstones and be ground to powder. He recognized that the country must have a breathing spell in which it could recuperate.

He justly resented the conduct of the French Minister Genet by ordering him to cease interfering in his endeavor to embroil our country in this war and in demanding of the French Government his recall and enforcing the dignity of our Government and our rights as a nation.

He brought to the administration of the country the

sagacity of a sage, the military knowledge of a great chieftain, and the devotion of a hero, all of which have won for him the highest commendation of his countrymen, and have ever endeared him to all humanity.

Among all our great men, with the exception of Abraham Lincoln, who arose in our country at a later day, Washington became the most celebrated, and is looked upon as the Father of his Country, as Abraham Lincoln become in its second greatest crisis its savior.

Under the wisdom of Washington and his associates, all of whom were men of great brilliancy, it can safely be said, "that our constitution sprang from a condition bordering on anarchy" and was administered by him as president for the well being of society and established this republic upon a firm base and sent it forward in its course to serve mankind.

It was in the midst of such conditions so burdened and agitated and so largely disturbed by distractions and theories of government, that Washington, the very foremost citizen and soldier of his time, a man of noble mien, yet of a modest and retiring disposition, with his high sense of duty and truth, was elevated to our first office and undertook to administer the constitution of the then newly-born republic for the common welfare.

How well he governed, let the mighty republic, with its now boundless power, with its hundred million in habitants, who, notwithstanding the fact that though near seven score years have passed since it gained its birthright, is but looking forward on the horizon of its morning, and which has been an inspiration for the down-trodden of the world, since we established our freedom.

As president he was wise, calm, just and dignified, free of all rancor and bitter partisanship. In fact, was a typical leader and the right man for the right place. It may be truthfully said that he was God-sent and God-given, as he came into the world and the affairs of our country in one of the greatest crises of the existence of our people and wrought manfully for our freedom.

He was a man of large experience, of caution and yet of great action. He did nothing which he did not conceive to be both just and reasonable. With a character as lofty as his mind, he ever endeavored to faithfully serve his country, and labored to strengthen the republic in all of its proper authority. He conceived that a new nation had been born and that it must be equipped with all the powers to ensure its rights and dignities, and to enforce its will and make for its well being and perpetuity.

He was ever a warm friend of humanity, liberty and science. Under his administration of governmental affairs the success of the nation, the times considered, was unsurpassed. Through his wise administration confidence and activity were restored in the business affairs of the people, and order in government, agriculture and commerce flourished, credit rose rapidly and society prospered under a sense of security, feeling and believing that it was both free and well-governed.

Good government and a firm administration ever make for progression. They are the foundation stones upon which are built a nation's greatness, and give it honorable standing in the world, and which make for the happiness of its people, and redound to its glory.

Washington had the power to divine amidst the confusion of rival interests and the cries of factional strife, the true aims, hopes and vital needs of the new-born republic and its people, and nothing could swerve him from the course which was straight ahead, and which has had such happy sequences for our people.

He was like an able pilot, who carries his boat through the stress of storm and weather to calmness and safety, saving and serving the interests committed to his care and charge.

The power to conceive and understand, the faith to believe in, and the unselfish courage to live for and serve the best interests of his country, were the central factors and great characteristics of Washington's life. They were the

heart and soul of his Americanism and counted for the grandeur of our people, the security and safety of our republic.

He taught that true Americanism was a belief in the inalienable rights of man to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, and that they were God-given. He realized that our liberty and happiness were as natural and essential to the well being of mankind as the beauty of the sunlight and the freedom of the winds and the mobility of the waters that coursed from our mountains to the sea. That all was God-given and inalienable.

He fundamentally believed that taxation without representation is tyranny, and that all just government can and must rest on the consent of the governed, and that a free people should choose its own rulers, if it would perpetuate its existence.

Professor Van Dyke has truthfully said, "that such is true Americanism, ideals embodying themselves in the life of a people, a creed heated white-hot in the furnace of conviction, and hammered into shape on the anvil of life."

And it was the subordination of self, to that ideal, that creed which gave eminence and glory to Washington, Franklin, Adams, Henry, Hamilton and all that brilliant galaxy of patriots who stood with him and them and made for and carved out our country's future history and greatness.

Washington was a great figure, in his day and generation, and was pre-eminent among the patriots with whom he lived and labored, "but only so in so far as a mountain peak extends farthest heavenward from the center of a mighty mountain range," or as a towering tree overtops its gigantic fellows in the forest. "He was buttressed among patriots" who were veritable giants in the cause of life, liberty and happiness under a free government which had come to serve and save mankind.

The Americanism of Washington and those brilliant men who stood with him shoulder to shoulder in the struggle for freedom and those countless patriots who fought for our

independence will never die. So long as the winds blow freely over our limitless prairies and our great mountain ranges lift their mighty crests into the blue of heaven, and our mighty rivers flow in majesty and beauty to the sea, the noble example and the valiant deeds of these men of the revolution will ever accentuate the patriotism of our people and nerve them to strive in the cause of freedom and work for the advancement of mankind.

At the end of his second term of office Washington retired to the privacy of his plantation home at Mt. Vernon, carrying with him the best wishes and plaudits of his countrymen, after having previously absolutely refused to consider a further re-election to the presidency. This refusal has set a precedent which has been faithfully observed by all of his successors in this exalted office to the present day.

He died at Mt. Vernon December 14th, 1799, after a brief illness, where he had led a noble, respected life, one filled with the beauty, joy and grandeur of living, and he has left us an example of noble, patient manhood, of a brilliant and almost unexampled patriotism.

In his life he has said to have done the two greatest things which in politics man can have the privilege of doing, in that he maintained by peace that independence of his country which he had acquired by war, for he founded free government in the name of the principles of order by re-establishing their sway, and it is said that when he retired from public life both tasks were accomplished and he could enjoy the results along with all the rest of his fellowmen.

In such a high enterprise we are told that what they have cost matters but little, for the sweat of such toil is dried at once on the brow where God places such laurels, and that very often men die under the burdens they carry before the day of recompense arrives, but Washington lived to receive it. He deserved and enjoyed both success and repose and gained immortality.

Of all great men he was acclaimed the most virtuous and the most fortunate. In this world God has no higher favors

to bestow. May our country ever be blessed with men of the caliber of Washington and Lincoln, for we then may be assured that our destinies are in good hands and our future assured.

As we continue to exist as a people may God in His unbounded wisdom and mercy ever continue to send to us such leaders, that we may serve him and work out a noble destiny. Our future lies in the asserting of an American policy, one that will be friendly but independent. We must be ever courteous but ever firm, and if we would exist as a free people and continue to enjoy our grand inheritance carved for us by Washington and saved to us by Lincoln, we must be ever ready and ever prepared to defend our rights and assert our interests as we try to be just toward ourselves, our fellowmen and Heaven.

We can maintain our position and insure peace only by being thoroughly prepared for war.

“Let us be just and fear not. Let all our acts and aims be our God’s, our Country’s and Truth’s.”

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